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### Abstract

The current research examined a moderated mediation model for the relationships among indicators of objective career success (salary and job level), subjective career success (career satisfaction) and turnover intention, as well as the boundary conditions of this process. Based on a survey study among a sample of Chinese managers ( $N = 324$ ), we found that both salary and job level were negatively related to turnover intention, with these relations fully mediated by career satisfaction. The results further showed that the relation between job level and career satisfaction was weaker among managers who perceived a higher level of organizational career management, but stronger among managers with a higher managerial career anchor. In support of our hypothesized model, the indirect effect of job level on turnover intention through career satisfaction existed only among managers who perceived a lower level of organizational career management or managers with a higher managerial career anchor. These findings carry implications for research on career success and turnover intention.

**Keywords:** subjective career success, objective career success, organizational career management, career anchor, turnover intention

## When Do Salary and Job Level Predict Career Satisfaction and Turnover Intention among Chinese Managers? The Role of Perceived Organizational Career Management and Career Anchor

Employee turnover often results in the extra financial cost of recruiting and training replacement staff, disrupted operations, decreased quality of customer service, and other negative organizational consequences (Allen, Bryant, & Vardaman, 2010; Hancock, Allen, Bosco, McDaniel, & Pearce, in press). Over the years, much research has been done to build understanding of turnover intention, in order to address the practical managerial issue of retaining highly valued employees (Hom, Mitchell, Lee, & Griffeth, 2012). With the careers of today's employees becoming more "boundaryless" and less bounded within specific organizations (Arthur, 1994), research has revealed that employee perception of subjective career success (e.g. career satisfaction) serves as an important predictor for their turnover intention (e.g., Pachulicz, Schmitt, & Kuljanin, 2008; Weng & McElroy, 2012). Therefore, it is becoming increasingly important for organizations to understand how to improve their employees' assessment of subjective career success, in order to reduce their turnover intention (Direnzo & Greenhaus, 2011).

The interdependence model of career success suggests that an individual's objective career success (e.g., salary, job level, number of promotions) serves as an important basis for their subjective career success, which in turn guides career decisions (Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005; Hall, 2002; Hall & Chandler, 2005). Consistently, it has been found that indicators of objective career success, such as salaries and hierarchical levels, are positively related to career satisfaction (e.g., Abele & Spurk, 2009; Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990; Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005), and negatively related to turnover intention (e.g., Gattiker, & Larwood, 1989; Trevor, Gerhart, & Boudreau, 1997). Therefore, it seems plausible that career satisfaction will improve if salary or job level is increased. Nevertheless, unlike objective career

success, an individual's subjective career success involves not only the evaluation of one's current objective career attainments, but also the perception of career-related contextual factors and self-views (Arthur et al., 2005; Greenhaus, Callanan, & Godshalk, 2000; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Heslin, 2005). Due to these distinctions, a recent meta-analysis showed that the correlations between objective and subjective indicators of career success are less than .30 (Ng et al., 2005), which suggests that there may be important moderators for the relationship between these two aspects of career success. Consistently, some studies indicate that the relationship between objective and subjective success varies across age or career stages (Altimus & Tersine, 1973; Lee & Wilbur, 1985). However, more work is needed to examine how organizational factors and individual career self-views qualify the relations among objective career success, subjective career success and work-related outcomes (Hall & Chandler, 2005; Heslin, 2005).

Based on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Gouldner, 1960; Homans, 1958) and career anchor theory (Schein, 1975), we propose a moderated mediation model to examine the boundary conditions for the relationships among indicators of objective career success (salary and job level), career satisfaction, and turnover intention. In light of the interdependence model of career success (Arthur et al., 2005; Hall, 2002; Hall & Chandler, 2005), we suggest that salary and job level will be negatively related to turnover intention, with these relations mediated by career satisfaction. From a social exchange perspective (Blau, 1964), perceived organizational career management (Sturges, Guest, Conway, & Mackenzie Davey, 2002) represents an important type of socio-emotional resource provided by organizations, which will increase an employee's positive feelings and expectations of career development. These psychological responses may buffer the negative effects of a lower salary and job level on career satisfaction and turnover intention. In addition, we argue that relations between job level and the two outcome variables may also depend on an

employee's career anchor (1975), with these relations being stronger among those with a higher managerial career anchor (Schein, 1985). This moderated mediation model was tested in a survey study among Chinese managers.

*Salary, Job Level, Career Satisfaction and Turnover Intention among Chinese Managers*

China's fast-growing economy facilitates the growth of organizations and creates more and more job opportunities; however, due to the limited supply of talent, voluntary turnover among employees is becoming a serious problem faced by Chinese organizations. For example, a survey revealed that the average turnover rate for companies in China was 18.9% in 2011 (51Job Corporation, 2012). Another survey found that 44% of the executives in Chinese companies regard the lack of talent as the biggest barrier in achieving their organizational goals (Lane & Pollner, 2008). Therefore, attracting and retaining talented employees represents a serious challenge faced by organizations (Farrell & Grant, 2005). Previous research showed that among Chinese managers, subjective evaluation of career goal progress, professional development, promotion speed and remuneration growth are negatively associated with their turnover intention (Weng & McElroy, 2012). The current research will further examine how and when objective career indicators (salary and job level) among Chinese managers predict their career satisfaction and turnover intention.

Among the most often used indicators of objective career success, salary has the utility of attaining material goals (Hall, 1976) and has been established as an important predictor for career satisfaction (Ng et al., 2005). In addition, research among American employees showed that salary growth was negatively related to turnover intention, especially among high performers (Trevor et al., 1997). Job level has the capacity to bundle together multiple resources, such as prestige, status and power (Nicholson & deWaal-Andrews, 2005). Therefore job level has also been found to be positively related to career satisfaction (Ng et al., 2005), and negatively related to turnover

intention (Carlopio & Gardner, 1995). In addition, the plentiful opportunities in the job market, as well as the cultural orientations of high power distance (Hofstede, 2001) and social comparison (White & Lehman, 2005) may also motivate Chinese managers to emphasize the utility of high salary and job level in achieving high power, social status and prestige. Accordingly, we propose that salary and job level will serve as significant predictors for career satisfaction and turnover intention for Chinese managers. Moreover, as suggested by the interdependence model of career success (Arthur et al., 2005; Hall, 2002; Hall & Chandler, 2005), we argue that career satisfaction will serve as a key explanatory link between salary, job level and turnover intention. Consequently, the following mediation model is proposed:

*Hypothesis 1: Managers' salary and job level will be negatively related to their turnover intention, with these relations being fully mediated by their career satisfaction.*

In addition to current objective career attainments, career satisfaction also involves subjective feelings, expectancies and self-views pertaining to careers (Arthur et al., 2005; Greenhaus et al., 2000; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Heslin, 2005). According to social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Gouldner, 1960; Homans, 1958), the exchange process between organizations and employees includes both extrinsic resources (e.g., salary, job level, promotion) and socio-emotional resources, such as organizational support (e.g., Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986), leader-member exchange (e.g., Settoon, Bennett, & Liden, 1996) and organizational career management (e.g., Sturges et al., 2002). Blau (1964) suggested that, compared with extrinsic factors, socio-emotional exchange is more likely to engender employees' positive responses, such as feelings of being trusted, valued, and respected, as well as a positive expectancy of career development. Thus, we argue that as an important type of socio-emotional resource, perceived organizational career management may elicit various positive reactions among

Chinese managers, which in turn will weaken the negative effects of lower salary and job level on their career satisfaction and turnover intention.

### *The Role of Perceived Organizational Career Management*

Organizational career management refers to the procedures taken by organizations to help promote career development, including mentoring programs, succession planning, job posting, individual counseling, external training, and so on (Gutteridge, 1986). These organizational career management practices often benefit career development among employees by enhancing self-awareness (e.g., Greenhaus & Connolly, 1982), promoting career-planning skills (e.g., Noe, 2002) and integrating employees' career development with organizational opportunities (Harris & Desimone, 1994). Due to these beneficial effects, perceived organizational career management significantly predicts employees' satisfaction with the promotion process, organizational commitment and job performance (Eby, Allen and Brinley, 2005; Sturges, Conway, Guest, & Liefoghe, 2005; Sturges, Guest, Conway, & Mackenzie Davey, 2002). Accordingly, in the current research, we propose that perceived organizational career management is positively related to managers' career satisfaction and negatively related to their turnover intention.

*Hypothesis 2:* Perceived organizational career management will be positively related to career satisfaction (H2a) and negatively related to turnover intention (H2b).

In addition to the main effects mentioned above, we argue that perceived organizational career management may also moderate the effects of salary and job level on managers' career satisfaction and turnover intention. From the perspective of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), a higher level of socio-emotional exchange is likely to engender positive feelings among employees, which may reduce negative reactions to the lack of other types of resources. For example, studies on teachers in Turkey showed that the negative effects of value incongruence with employing

organizations on career satisfaction are significantly weakened when the teachers perceive a higher level of organizational support or leader-member exchange (Erdogan, Kraimer, & Liden, 2004). Similarly, we argue that a higher level of perceived organizational career management may make Chinese managers feel trusted, valued and respected by organizations, and this may enable managers to maintain a higher level of career satisfaction in spite of a lower salary or job level. It is noteworthy that perceived organizational career management differs from other types of socio-emotional exchange in that it also integrates career development with organizational opportunities (Harris & Desimone, 1994), which could in turn heighten expectations of future career success and therefore serve as a buffer against a negative response to a lower salary or job level (Greenhaus, Callanan, & Godshalk, 2000; Vroom, 1964).

*Hypothesis 3:* Perceived organizational career management will negatively moderate the relationship between salary and career satisfaction, such that salary will be more strongly related to career satisfaction for managers with a lower level of perceived organizational career management (H3a); perceived organizational career management will negatively moderate the relationship between job level and career satisfaction, such that job level will be more strongly related to career satisfaction for managers with a lower level of perceived organizational career management (H3b).

In addition, when managers perceive a higher level of organizational career management, salary and job level are less likely to predict their career satisfaction, which means that career satisfaction is less likely to mediate the effect of job level on turnover intention (Arthur et al., 2005; Hall, 2002; Hall & Chandler, 2005). Accordingly, we propose the following hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 4:* Perceived organizational career management will negatively moderate the indirect effect of salary on turnover intention through career satisfaction, such that career



satisfaction will mediate the effect of salary only among managers who perceive a lower level of organizational career management (H4a); perceived organizational career management will negatively moderate the indirect effect of job level on turnover intention through career satisfaction, such that career satisfaction will mediate the effect of job level only among managers who perceive a lower level of organizational career management (H4b).

### *The Role of Managerial Career Anchor*

Since people have diverse career self-views and place different values on the objective indicators of career success (Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrad, & Herma, 1951), it is likely that career orientation plays an important role in an individual's subjective career evaluation. Consistently, Heslin (2005) proposed that the congruence between career self-views and career attainments will lead to positive career evaluations. As job level represents the level of power that managers can use to coordinate employees in achieving organizational goals, we argue that job level will serve as a better predictor for career satisfaction and turnover intention among managers scoring higher on managerial career anchor (Schein, 1975).

Career anchor refers to the self-view of competence, motives, and values that guides an individual's career development (Schein, 1975). Based on his qualitative and quantitative research, Schein (1985, 1996) developed eight types of career anchors, including security/stability, technical, managerial, autonomy, entrepreneurial creativity, dedication to a cause, pure challenge, and lifestyle. The managerial career anchor refers to the extent to which individuals prefer to obtain power and coordinate others for a common goal. Individuals with a higher managerial career anchor define career success as becoming high-level managers in organizations and they are most fulfilled when they are able to integrate the efforts of others toward a common task. Since a higher

job level provides the legitimate power and responsibility for managers to influence other employees in achieving organizational goals, we argue that for managers with a higher managerial career anchor, job level may serve as a stronger predictor for their career satisfaction. For managers with a lower managerial career anchor, a higher job level brings managerial responsibilities that they do not prefer (Wallace, 1995); therefore, the positive effect of job level on career satisfaction may not be significant. Based on the above discussion, we hypothesize that:

*Hypothesis 5:* Managerial career anchor will positively moderate the relationship between job level and career satisfaction, such that job level will be more strongly related to career satisfaction among managers with a higher managerial career anchor.

Given the mediation role of career satisfaction for the relation between job level and turnover intention, we further propose that the indirect effects of job level on turnover intention may also be moderated by managerial career anchor:

*Hypothesis 6:* Managerial career anchor will positively moderate the indirect effect of job level on turnover intention through career satisfaction, such that career satisfaction will mediate the effect of job level only among managers with a higher managerial career anchor.

The proposed model is displayed in Figure 1. A survey study was conducted among a sample of Chinese managers to test this model.

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Insert Figure 1 here  
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## Method

### *Participants and Procedure*

Data were collected by 300 students who enrolled in a career development course at a university in Beijing, China. As a course project, each student was required to meet at least one

full-time manager to conduct an interview on the manager's career development. The questionnaire of the current research was completed during the interview. Interviewees signed a consent form before they started the questionnaire, and their email address was also recorded. After the data collection, an enquiry email was sent to all the managers who were interviewed to confirm that they completed the questionnaire themselves. Data collection started in March 2011 and finished in June 2011.

Through the above procedure, the sample consisted of 324 full-time Chinese managers (205 males and 119 females) from various organizations. Of these, 11% were 21 to 25 years old, 26% were 26 to 30 years old, 9% were 31 to 35 years old, 10% were 36 to 40 years old, 19% were 41 to 45 years old, 22% were 46 to 50 years old, and 3% were 51 years old or above. Regarding education, 3% of participants had high school education or below, 18% had an associate degree, 57% had a bachelor's degree, 20% had a master's degree, and 2% had a doctorate degree. Participants worked in different industries, including manufacture, construction or transportation (21%), high technology (14%), finance or accounting (17%), education or research (14%), counseling (6%), media or publishing (5%), food or retail (1%), and government or public service (22%). The size of the organizations ranged as follows: 29% of the organizations that participants worked for had 100 employees or less, 29% had 100 to 500 employees, 9% had 501 to 1,000 employees, and 33% had 1,001 employees or more.

### *Measures*

*Job Level.* As different organizations have different hierarchical structures, using the absolute job level may lead to incorrect inferences. Following the procedure of previous research (e.g., Dries et al., 2009; Kirchmeyer, 1998), an index of job level was computed by dividing each participant's absolute level by the total number of levels in the hierarchy of the employing

organization. Participants were asked: “In the organization you are currently working for, use a number to indicate the highest job level (using “1” as the lowest level); use a number to indicate your current job level (using “1” as the lowest level).” Previous research has demonstrated the validity of the self-report method in collecting responses on objective career success (Dries et al., 2009; Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995; Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). To further reduce response bias, participants were instructed to consult interviewers if they had difficulty in understanding the meaning of this question.

*Salary.* Participants were asked to indicate their annual salary on a 17-point scale with an interval of “¥ 50,000” (around US\$7,930), for example, 1 = “¥ 50,000 or below”, 2 = “¥ 50,001 to ¥ 100,000”, 3 = “¥ 100,001 to ¥ 150,000”, 17 = “¥ 850,001 or above”. A *ln* transformation was conducted for this variable due to its deviance from normal distribution (see Seibert, Crant, & Kraimer, 1999).

*Managerial Career Anchor.* Participants were asked to rate their managerial career anchor on three items adopted from the career anchor scale developed by Schein (1990). This scale has been widely used in previous studies (e.g., Becka & La Lopab, 2001; Yarnall, 1998), and items were rated with a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). In the current study, the  $\alpha$  for these items was .72. A sample item was, “I am most fulfilled in my work when I have been able to integrate the efforts of others toward a common task”.

*Perceived Organizational Career Management.* Participants were asked to indicate their perception of organizational career management practices on eleven items adopted from a previous study (Eby et al., 2005). The items measured the extent to which participants perceived their organizations provided satisfactory career management practices, including mentoring programs, succession planning, outplacement, career ladders and paths, job posting, individual counseling,

external training opportunities, in-house training, promotability forecasting, job rotation and developmental assessment centers. They were rated on a 7-point, Likert-type response scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). In the current study, the  $\alpha$  coefficient for the eleven items was .95. A sample item was, “My organization provides satisfactory career ladders and paths”.

*Career Satisfaction.* Participants were asked to rate their subjective career satisfaction using the scale developed by Greenhaus et al. (1990). This scale consisted of five items, which were rated with a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). In the current study, the  $\alpha$  for the five items was .91. A sample item was, “I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career”.

*Turnover Intention.* Participants were asked to rate their turnover intention using the scale developed by Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins and Klesh (1979). This scale consisted of three items on participants’ intention to quit the current organization. These items were rated with a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). In the current study, the  $\alpha$  for the three items was .74. A sample item was, “I often think of leaving the organization”.

*Control Variables.* Since age and education have been found to be related to indicators of career success (e.g., Ng et al., 2005, Ng & Feldman, 2009), the current study measured and controlled for the effects of these variables (Becker, 2005). In addition, since an individual’s perception of job level is influenced by organizational size (Greenhaus, Sugalski, & Crispin, 1978), we also measured and controlled for the effect of organizational size. The age of the participants was measured by a 9-point scale with an interval of 5 years, for example, 1 = “25 years old or below”, 2 = “26 to 30 years old”, 3 = “31 to 35 years old”, 9 = “61 years old or above”. Participants’ education was measured on a 7-point scale, with 1 = “primary school”, 2 = “middle school”, 3 =

“high school”, 4 = “associate degree”, 5 = “bachelor’s degree”, 6 = “master’s degree”, 7 = “doctorate degree”. Organizational size was measured on a 4-point scale, with 1 = “100 employees or less”, 2 = “101 to 500 employees”, 3 = “501 to 1,000 employees”, 4 = “1,001 employees or more”.

## Results

### *Confirmatory Factor Analysis*

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to examine whether the four psychological constructs (career satisfaction, turnover intention, managerial career anchor, and perceived organizational career management) used in the current research were mutually distinct. Firstly, the four-factor model was tested and the correlations among the four factors were freely estimated. Model fit was assessed using the  $\chi^2$  test statistic, the comparative fit index (*CFI*), and the root mean square error of approximation (*RMSEA*). The results of the CFA showed that all of the factor loadings were significant ( $ps < .05$ ), and the goodness-of-fit indexes indicated that the proposed model fit the data,  $\chi^2 = 617.84$ ,  $df = 203$ ,  $\chi^2 / df = 3.04$ ,  $CFI = .91$ ,  $RMSEA = .08$ . In the second model, all items of these four constructs were assumed to represent a single latent factor ( $\chi^2 = 1495.29$ ,  $df = 209$ ,  $CFI = .73$ ,  $RMSEA = .14$ ). The four-factor model fit the data significantly better than the single-factor model ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 877.45$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Since the self-reported measures of career satisfaction, turnover intention, and perceived organizational career management were all related to participants’ evaluations of different aspects of their career, additional CFA was then conducted to demonstrate that these three constructs were also distinguishable. Models 3-5 assumed three correlated factors: by combining items under perceived organizational career management and turnover intention as one factor ( $\chi^2 = 766.84$ ,  $df = 206$ ,  $CFI = .88$ ,  $RMSEA = .09$ ), combining items under career satisfaction and turnover intention as

one factor ( $\chi^2 = 795.89$ ,  $df = 206$ ,  $CFI = .88$ ,  $RMSEA = .09$ ), and combining items under perceived organizational career management and career satisfaction as one factor ( $\chi^2 = 1318.84$ ,  $df = 206$ ,  $CFI = .76$ ,  $RMSEA = .13$ ). Fit indexes showed that the four-factor model fit the data significantly better than the above three-factor models ( $\Delta\chi^2 \geq 149.00$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $ps < .001$ ). Therefore, all these four constructs could be treated as independent variables for further analyses.

### *Descriptives and Correlations*

The descriptive statistics and correlations among age, education, organizational tenure, organizational size,  $\ln$  salary, job level, perceived organizational career management, managerial career anchor, career satisfaction and turnover intention are presented in Table 1. The results from correlational analysis showed that  $\ln$  salary was related to job level ( $r(324) = .32$ ,  $p < .001$ ), career satisfaction ( $r(324) = .32$ ,  $p < .001$ ), turnover intention ( $r(324) = -.13$ ,  $p < .05$ ), perceived organizational career management ( $r(324) = .27$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and managerial career anchor ( $r(324) = .24$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Job level was related to career satisfaction ( $r(324) = .28$ ,  $p < .001$ ), turnover intention ( $r(324) = -.18$ ,  $p < .01$ ), perceived organizational career management ( $r(324) = .15$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and managerial career anchor ( $r(324) = .15$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Perceived organizational career management was related positively to career satisfaction ( $r(324) = .54$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and negatively to turnover intention ( $r(324) = -.51$ ,  $p < .001$ ), which supported Hypotheses 2a and 2b. Managerial career anchor was positively related to career satisfaction ( $r(324) = .22$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

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Insert Table 1 here  
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### *Testing for Main and Mediation Effects*

We examined the mediation hypothesis (H1) with a procedure developed by Preacher and Hayes (2008). This approach estimates the path coefficients as well as the indirect effects with bootstrapping, which avoids tenuous distribution assumptions (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Prior to

the analyses, all continuous predictors were mean-centered (Aiken & West, 1991). According to the procedure outlined by Preacher and Hayes (2008), three criteria should be met to confirm a mediation effect. First, the independent variable must be significantly related to the mediator. Second, the mediator must be significantly related to the dependent variable after controlling for the effect of the independent variable. Third, the indirect effect must be significant in a bootstrapping test.

Hypothesis 1 predicts that the effects of salary and job level on turnover intention will be mediated by career satisfaction. In support of this hypothesis, after controlling for the effects of education, age and organizational size, both salary ( $B = .39, SE = .09, t = 4.49, p < .001$ ) and job level ( $B = .88, SE = .27, t = 3.25, p < .01$ ) were positively related to career satisfaction; after controlling for the effects of education, age, organization size, salary and job level, the positive relationship between career satisfaction and turnover intention was also significant,  $B = -.47, SE = .06, t = 7.71, p < .001$ . The bootstrapping results showed that the indirect effect of salary was significant, with a 95% CI not containing zero (-.30, -.10); the indirect effect of job level was also significant, with a 95% CI not containing zero (-.73, -.18), which supported Hypothesis 1. Moreover, both salary ( $B = .06, SE = .10, t = .59, ns$ ) and job level ( $B = -.26, SE = .30, t = -.87, ns$ ) were no longer significantly related to turnover intention when career satisfaction was included in the model; therefore, career satisfaction fully mediated the effects of these two variables on turnover intention.

#### *Testing for Moderation and Moderated Mediation Effects*

To test the moderation and moderated mediation hypotheses, we utilized the procedure developed by Preacher, Rucker and Hayes (2007). This procedure involves two kinds of regression equations: one for the “mediator model” (career satisfaction as dependent variable) and one for the “dependent variable model” (turnover intention as dependent variable). To support the simple moderation hypotheses (H3a, H3b and H5), the interactions in the mediator models should be significant. To support the moderated mediation hypotheses (H4a, H4b and H6), the indirect effects



should vary as a function of the level of the moderators. In our analyses, we controlled for the effects of education, age and organizational size when examining the proposed model. Since these effects were hypothesized with specific positive or negative directions, we used a one-tailed test when testing these hypotheses. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 2.

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Insert Table 2 here  
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The first set of analyses was concerned with the moderating effect of perceived organizational career management on the relations among salary, job level, career satisfaction and the corresponding moderated mediation effects. The results showed that H3a and H4a were not supported since the interaction effect between salary and perceived organizational career management on career satisfaction was not significant,  $B = -.07$ ,  $SE = .07$ ,  $t = -.99$ ,  $ns$  (See Table 2). Consistent with Hypothesis 3b, the interaction effect between job level and perceived organizational career management on career satisfaction was significant,  $B = -.42$ ,  $SE = .22$ ,  $t = -1.93$ ,  $p < .05$  (See Table 2). The interaction was plotted at one standard deviation below and above the mean of perceived organizational career management to examine its nature (see Figure 2). As expected, when perceived organizational career management was lower, career satisfaction increased with job level,  $B = 1.05$ ,  $SE = .37$ ,  $t = 2.83$ ,  $p < .01$ . When perceived organizational career management was higher, however, the relationship was not significant,  $B = .11$ ,  $SE = .31$ ,  $t = .36$ ,  $ns$ .

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Insert Figure 3 here  
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In support of the moderated mediation hypothesis associated with perceived organizational career management (H4b), the bootstrapping tests showed that when perceived organizational career management was lower, the indirect effect was significant,  $B = -.23$ ,  $SE = .11$ ,  $t = -2.12$ ,  $p < .05$ . When perceived organizational career management was higher, however, the indirect effect was not significant,  $B = -.03$ ,  $SE = .07$ ,  $t = -.35$ ,  $ns$  (see Table 2 for the results).

The second set of analyses was concerned with the moderating effect of managerial career anchor on the relationship between job level and career satisfaction (H5) and the corresponding

moderated mediation effect (H6). As shown in Table 2, the predicted interaction effect was significant,  $B = .50$ ,  $SE = .23$ ,  $t = 2.23$ ,  $p < .05$ . To examine the nature of this interaction, we plotted the simple slopes in Figure 3, with higher and lower levels of managerial career anchor at one standard deviation above and below the mean (Aiken & West, 1991). When managerial career anchor was lower, job level was not significantly related to career satisfaction,  $B = .15$ ,  $SE = .32$ ,  $t = .46$ , *ns*. When managerial career anchor was higher, however, the positive relationship between job level and career satisfaction was significant,  $B = 1.01$ ,  $SE = .30$ ,  $t = 3.40$ ,  $p < .001$ .

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 Insert Figure 2 here  
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To test Hypothesis 6, which postulates that the indirect effect of job level on turnover intention via career satisfaction varies with managerial career anchor, we estimated the conditional indirect effect at two values of managerial career anchor: one standard deviation below and above the mean. The results indicated that when managerial career anchor was lower, the indirect effect was not significant,  $B = -.03$ ,  $SE = .08$ ,  $t = -.44$ , *ns*. When managerial career anchor was higher, however, the indirect effect was significant  $B = -.22$ ,  $SE = .10$ ,  $t = -2.35$ ,  $p < .05$  (see Table 2).

### Discussion

The current research examined how and when indicators of objective career success (salary and job level) predicted career satisfaction and turnover intention with a sample of Chinese managers. We proposed a moderated mediation model and found that both salary and job level were negatively related to turnover intention through the full mediation of career satisfaction. In addition, the effects of job level on career satisfaction and turnover intention were only significant among participants who perceived a lower level of organizational career management and those with a higher managerial career anchor. These findings contribute to current research literature in several ways.

First, our results highlight the mediation role of career satisfaction in the relationships

among salary, job level and turnover intention. These findings provide supportive evidence that among Chinese managers, indicators of objective success are internalized to exert an impact on turnover intention. The plentiful job opportunities produced by the fast-growing economy may account for the importance of salary and job level in Chinese employees' career satisfaction and turnover intention. In addition, for Chinese people, the the cultural norms of high power distance (Hofstede, 2001) and social comparison (White & Lehman, 2005) may draw their attention to the social status and face that can be enhanced by a high salary and job level. In areas with slower economic development and less emphasis on power or social comparison, the relations between indicators of objective career success (e.g., salary, job level, promotion) with career satisfaction and turnover intention may not be that strong (Briscoe, Hall, & Mayrhofer, 2012). Future empirical investigations should continue to examine whether this mediation model can be generalized to other socioeconomic contexts, as well as the societal factors that may qualify the relations of these variables.

Second, the present findings reveal that perceived organizational career management buffers the negative effects of lower job level on both career satisfaction and turnover intention. As such, career satisfaction is contingent on both tangible, material resources such as job level and intangible socio-emotional resources such as perceived organizational career management. Rather than focusing merely on the directional influences between objective and subjective success, our moderated mediation model embeds the psychological process of interpreting career success in organizational practices and contexts. It is possible that, as we argue, perceived organizational career management engenders feelings of being trusted, valued and respected (Blau, 1964), therefore reducing the negative effects of lower job level. Therefore perceived organizational career management has similar beneficial effects to perceived organizational support on employees' career

satisfaction (Erdogan et al., 2004). However, perceived organizational career management differs from perceived organizational support in that it represents a more systematic and comprehensive scope of procedures adopted by organizations in helping employees' career development. These procedures may play a distinctive role in promoting future career expectancy among managers, which in turn eliminates their negative reactions to a lower job level (Greenhaus et al., 2000; Vroom, 1964). Future research should continue to examine the different mechanisms underlying the positive effects of perceived organizational career management on employees' career satisfaction and turnover intention, as well as the distinctions between perceived organizational career management and other types of socio-emotional resources.

Third, our results also show that the interactions between salary and perceived organizational career management on career satisfaction and turnover intention are not significant. Since the main purpose of organizational career management is to enhance upward mobility, it is possible that for managers at a lower job level, the compensatory effect of perceived organizational career management is more salient; for managers on a lower salary, perceived organizational career management may be regarded as less effective in getting their income raised. By analyzing the different characteristics of objective indicators (e.g., job level, salary, number of promotions), future research should further examine the corresponding mechanisms underlying the relations between diverse aspects of career success and outcome variables (Nicholson et al., 2005).

Fourth, by examining the moderating effects of career anchor on the relationship between job level and career satisfaction, the current study empirically confirmed the propositions raised by researchers on how career self-views influence one's interpretation and evaluation of their career (Heslin, 2005). As suggested by career anchor theory (Schein, 1975), managerial career anchor reflects the orientation to coordinate others for a common task; therefore, for managers who score

higher on career anchor, job level plays a more important role in predicting career satisfaction.

The internalization of objective success is thus qualified by an individual's psychological attributes, especially their career self-image being projected onto career development. Future research may continue to examine other relevant individual moderators by considering the diverse psychological foundations of subjective career success (Heslin, 2005). Moreover, these findings also suggest that the uni-dimensional measure of career satisfaction may not capture the comprehensive psychological meanings underlying subjective career success, and researchers should adopt a multi-dimensional approach to measure this important concept (Arthur et al., 2005).

#### *Practical implications*

The current findings also carry practical implications for organization management. First, the mediation role of career satisfaction on the relationship between job level and turnover intention suggests that, to reduce turnover intention among managers, organizations should pay more attention to understanding and improving career satisfaction (Direnzo & Greenhaus, 2011). Second, the current research further reveals that perceived organizational career management buffers the negative effects of lower job level on career satisfaction and turnover intention. Organizations can promote career satisfaction among managers at a lower job level by providing career management practices to enhance their self-awareness (e.g., Greenhaus & Connolly, 1982), promote their career planning skills (Noe, 2002), and prepare them for higher positions in the future (Harris & Desimone, 1994). Thus, organizational career management is a powerful tool, increasing career satisfaction among managers, as well as increasing their loyalty to the organization. Funds spent on career management practices should therefore be a worthwhile investment, maintaining the stability of manpower in the short term and improving the morale of employees in the long term.

Third, the moderation role of career anchor suggests that, due to individual differences in

career orientation, the practice of upward movement may strongly affect career satisfaction among managers with a higher managerial career anchor. Since organizations often have a limited number of high-level positions, to maximize the beneficial effects of upward mobility, organizations should take employees' career anchor into consideration and offer leadership roles to those who aspire to be efficacious and influential leaders. In addition to objective criteria for career success, the congruence of career anchor and job fulfillment is important to sustain employees' subjective perception of success.

#### *Possible Limitations and Future Research Directions*

Despite the promising results in the current paper, there are some limitations associated with the research. First, the current study was conducted among managers, and the results found in this sample may not be applied to other employee populations. Managers are more likely to demonstrate a strong managerial career anchor, so job level appears to be very important to them. For employees in other positions, such as technicians, job level may not serve as such a significant predictor of the outcome variables. Therefore, our proposed moderated mediation model may not be supported among other employee samples.

Second, the measures adopted in the current research carry some limitations. First, when measuring job level, we computed an index by dividing each participant's absolute job level by the total number of levels in the hierarchy of the employing organization. Although previous research demonstrated the validity of this method in collecting responses on objective career success (Dries et al., 2009; Judge et al., 1995; Podsakoff & Organ, 1986), the job level index used in the current study may carry different meanings across organizations of different sizes and sectors. Second, the results showed that the correlation between job level and perceived organizational career management was significant ( $r = .15$ ). Although this relationship is weak, it is possible that the

measure of perceived organizational career management reflect both the available career management practices in the organizations and the specific career management that respondents have personally experienced. Future research should improve the operationalization of these constructs by collecting data from multiple sources.

Third, since participants rated themselves in the same measurement context, common method variance may be artificially influencing the current findings (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Although the current study relied on self-reports from participants, the CFA representing a single latent factor was found to be a poor fit to the underlying factor structure of the focal study variables. Moreover, the major findings of the current study are moderation effects and these effects are conceivably less influenced by common method bias (Evans, 1985). Another limitation is that the cross-sectional design of the current research does not allow for an optimal estimation for the dynamic relationships among salary, job level, career satisfaction and turnover intention. Future research should seek to corroborate the findings of the current study by using multiple reports, methods, and time periods.

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Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics, Reliability Coefficients, and Inter-Correlations among Variables*

|   | <i>Mean</i> | <i>SD</i> | 1         | 2         | 3         | 4         | 5         | 6          | 7          | 8          | 9          |
|---|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| 1. Education                                  | 5.00        | .80       | <b>NA</b> |           |           |           |           |            |            |            |            |
| 2. Organizational size                        | 2.45        | 1.22      | .19***    | <b>NA</b> |           |           |           |            |            |            |            |
| 3. Age  | .90         | .68       | -.20***   | -.08      | <b>NA</b> |           |           |            |            |            |            |
| 4. <i>Ln</i> salary                           | 3.81        | 1.85      | .05       | -.01      | .06       | <b>NA</b> |           |            |            |            |            |
| 5. Job level                                  | .58         | .25       | -.17**    | -.29***   | .40***    | .32***    | <b>NA</b> |            |            |            |            |
| 6. Perceived organizational career management | 4.55        | 1.09      | .14*      | -.02      | -.02      | .27***    | .15**     | <b>.95</b> |            |            |            |
| 7. Managerial career anchor                   | 4.09        | .86       | .05       | -.01      | -.08      | .24***    | .15**     | .19***     | <b>.72</b> |            |            |
| 8. Career satisfaction                        | 4.94        | 1.07      | .10       | -.02      | .15**     | .32***    | .28***    | .54***     | .22***     | <b>.91</b> |            |
| 9. Turnover intention                         | 3.01        | 1.18      | -.07      | .01       | -.15**    | -.13*     | -.18**    | -.51*      | -.02       | -.44***    | <b>.74</b> |

Note. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ . Reliability coefficients appear on the diagonal in bold.

Table 2

*Moderation and Moderated Mediation Effects for Perceived Organizational Career Management and Managerial Career Anchor*

| Mediator variable model with career satisfaction as dependent variable                  |                        |                |               |               |
|---|------------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| Variable  | <i>B</i>               | <i>SE</i>      | <i>t</i>      | <i>P</i>      |
| Constant  | 5.37                   | .24            | 21.96         | < .01         |
| Education   | .06                    | .06            | 1.01          | <i>Ns</i>     |
| Organizational size   | .04                    | .04            | 1.00          | <i>Ns</i>     |
| Age   | .07                    | .03            | 2.54          | < .05         |
| <i>Ln</i> salary  | .21                    | .08            | 2.74          | < .01         |
| Job level   | .58                    | .24            | 2.40          | < .05         |
| Managerial career anchor (MCA)  | .13                    | .06            | 2.23          | < .05         |
| Perceived organizational career management (POCM)                                       | .24                    | .21            | 1.11          | <i>Ns</i>     |
| <i>Ln</i> salary × POCM   | -.07                   | .07            | -.99          | <i>Ns</i>     |
| Job level × POCM  | -.42                   | .22            | -1.93         | < .05         |
| Job level × MCA   | .50                    | .23            | 2.23          | < .05         |
| Dependent variable model with turnover intention as dependent variable                  |                        |                |               |               |
| Variable  | <i>B</i>               | <i>SE</i>      | <i>t</i>      | <i>P</i>      |
| Constant  | 4.53                   | .45            | 10.07         | < .01         |
| Education   | -.02                   | .07            | -.31          | <i>Ns</i>     |
| Organizational size   | -.03                   | .05            | -.65          | <i>Ns</i>     |
| Age   | -.07                   | .03            | -2.12         | < .05         |
| <i>Ln</i> salary  | .08                    | .09            | .86           | <i>Ns</i>     |
| Job level   | -.26                   | .28            | -.92          | <i>Ns</i>     |
| MCA   | .12                    | .07            | 1.73          | < .05         |
| POCM  | -.26                   | .25            | -1.05         | <i>Ns</i>     |
| <i>Ln</i> salary × POCM   | .07                    | .08            | .80           | <i>Ns</i>     |
| Job level × POCM  | .27                    | .26            | 1.05          | <i>Ns</i>     |
| Job level × MCA   | -.63                   | .26            | -2.40         | < .05         |
| Career satisfaction   | -.22                   | .07            | -3.39         | < .01         |
| Conditional indirect effect as a function of perceived organizational career management |                        |                |               |               |
| Value of POCM   | <i>Indirect Effect</i> | <i>Boot SE</i> | <i>Boot z</i> | <i>Boot p</i> |
| -1 <i>SD</i> (-1.09)  | -.23                   | .11            | -2.12         | < .05         |
| +1 <i>SD</i> (1.09)   | -.03                   | .07            | -.35          | <i>Ns</i>     |
| Conditional indirect effect as a function of managerial career anchor                   |                        |                |               |               |
| Value of MCA  | <i>Indirect effect</i> | <i>Boot SE</i> | <i>Boot z</i> | <i>Boot p</i> |
| -1 <i>SD</i> (-.86)   | -.03                   | .08            | -.44          | <i>Ns</i>     |
| +1 <i>SD</i> (.86)  | -.22                   | .10            | -2.35         | < .05         |

*Note.* *N* = 324. Bootstrap sample size = 5000. Results were reported after controlling for age, education and organizational size.

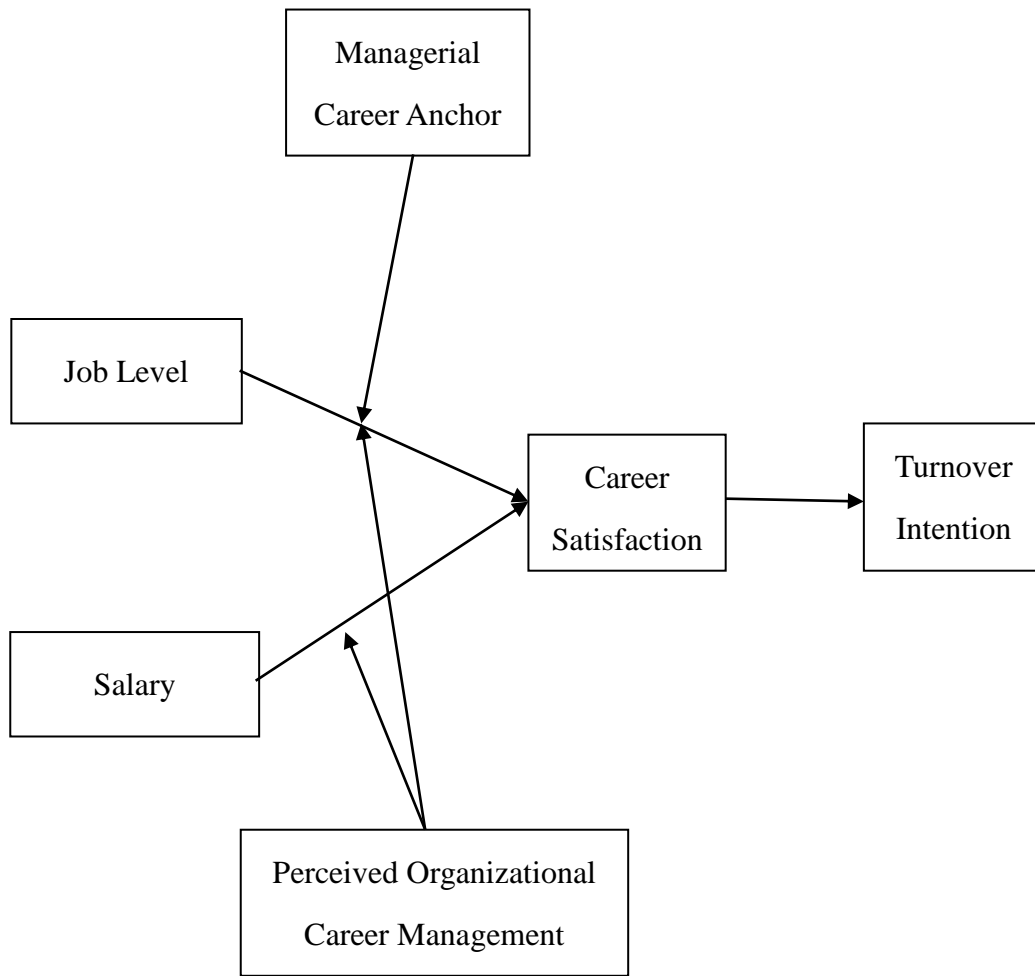
### Figure Captions

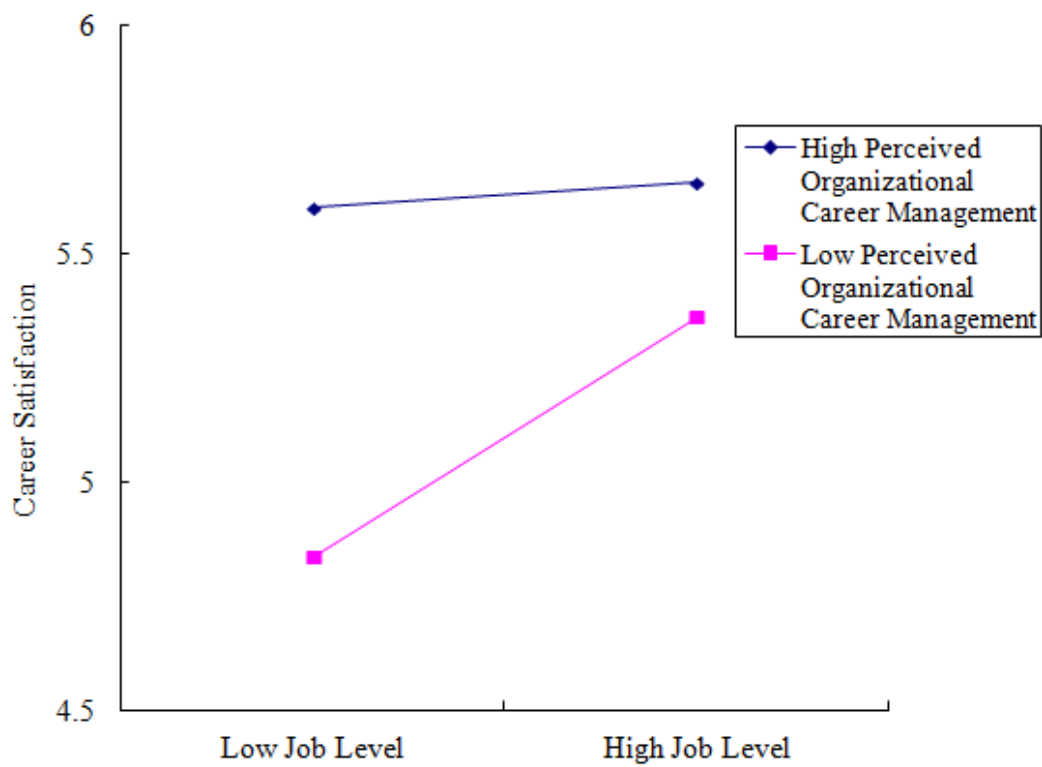
*Figure 1.* The Proposed Moderated Mediation Model

*Figure 2.* Interaction between Job Level and Perceived Organizational Career Management on Career Satisfaction.

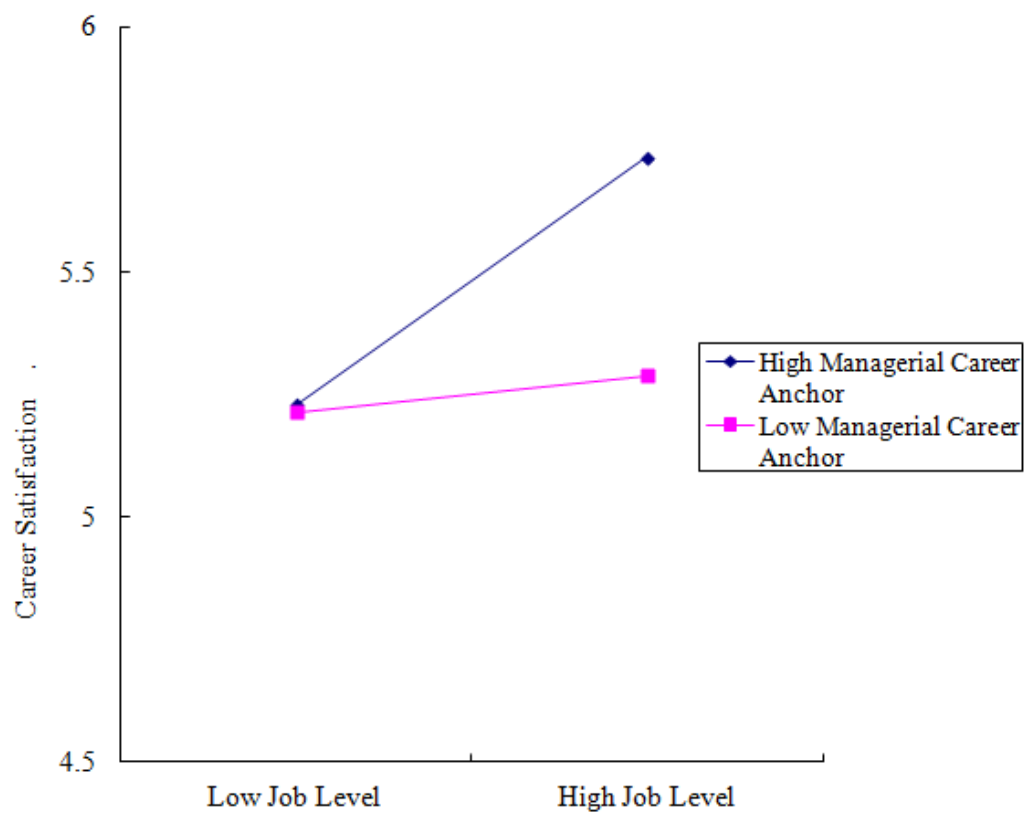
*Figure 3.* Interaction between Job Level and Managerial Career Anchor on Career Satisfaction.







Notes: Low job level and low perceived organizational career management are defined as at least one standard deviation below the mean; high job level and high perceived organizational career management are defined as at least one standard deviation above the mean. High numbers indicate greater career satisfaction.



Notes: Low job level and low managerial career anchor are defined as at least one standard deviation below the mean; high job level and high managerial career anchor are defined as at least one standard deviation above the mean. High numbers indicate greater career satisfaction.